Five Days Away

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Five Days Away

by ShadeCrawler

Summary

The Provisional Exam is five days away. Shouta doesn't know who's more nervous. His students or himself.

Notes

A shorter one than usual but there were things that I wanted to touch on before the Provisional Exam itself. Which, hopefully, will be longer. Hope you all like this installment!

See the end of the work for more notes

“Babe. Shouta. Kitten. Love of my absolute life. We have two cats and two homeroom classes between us. We don’t need a puppy.”

Shouta groaned into his bowl of cereal, giving Hizashi the stink eye as he shoved a large spoonful of chocolate pebbles into his mouth. Hizashi just smiled at him warmly from where he was putting together two mugs of tea for them both. “But consider this,” Shouta argued around a mouthful of his breakfast. “Huskies,” he swallowed hard and pointed at his husband with his spoon, “are cute.” It took almost everything in him not to snort and choke on his breakfast at Hizashi’s answering reluctant thoughtful expression. Couldn’t blame him. It was a really good argument.

It was early on Monday morning and, as always, it was the one day of the week that made Shouta happy to be awake so early. Mondays remained Shouta’s favourite day of the week and he couldn’t see that changing anytime soon. The reset button had been pressed and Shouta was going to will a good day out of thin air if it fucking killed somebody. Not him of course. Oh, fucking God, no, he had too much to do to die just for a good day. Or Hizashi. Or one of his students. Or any of the people Shouta cared for. Shouta would will a good day into thin air even if one of the people that made the other three hundred and sixty-four a living nightmare had to die for it to happen.

That worked.

And it was already getting off to a great start. Shouta had managed to piece together an unheard of eight hours of sleep. He felt like he could fight God and win. He felt like he could teach his Hell Spawn and not immediately a headache. He felt like Midoriya could manifest any Goddamn Quirk in the universe, even one that came with a visible mutation that would be a bitch and a half to explain away to reporters and the Hero Commission, and all Shouta would do would nod and get to fucking work.

He felt that if he pressed in just the right spots, he’d have himself a puppy by the end of the week.

Hizashi rolled his eyes fondly and slid a mug full of tea across the table. Shouta stopped it from sliding off the table without even looking. “Shouta, Kitten, when would we have the time to care for the pup? Take them for walks and stuff?”

Shouta arched his eyebrow. “We have *two homeroom classes*,

‘Zashi. The kids have to earn their keep somehow.” He shrugged and ignored Hizashi’s burst of laughter, fighting back a smile of his own. “I can’t speak for yours, but half of mine have the personalities of puppies already. I think they’d love the chance to run around with a Huskey. Hell, I’ll phrase it as training and they’ll eat it up.”

“Shouta,” Hizashi laughed, burying his face into one hand. He was standing right in the perfect spot that the sunlight shining through the open window was practically making him glow. Another reason why Shouta loved Monday Mornings. They were the perfect chance to bask in his husband’s beauty. “Shouta, do you even know what Huskies are like as puppies? Or did you look at a picture of a Huskey puppy and just imprint? They’re a lot of work, Kitty. Have you ever been *near* a Huskey before?”

Shouta met his husband’s eyes and pulled out his phone without looking away. And, again, without looking away, he pulled up the pictures that he had asked his Mama and Mum to send him of when he was a kid with his Huskey puppy and slid it over to Hizashi. The perfect evidence. These showed that he knew exactly what came with raising a Huskey puppy. There was no way that this could backfire on him in any way.

“OH MY GOD, SHOUTA, YOU WERE SO FUCKING CUTE!!!”

Oh God, it backfired.

“Never mind, a Huskey isn’t worth this misery,” Shouta muttered, grabbing his phone back away from his teary-eyed, beaming husband. He huffed and crammed another spoonful of chocolate pebbles into his mouth. He tried his best to ignore the bright red flush crawling up his neck and glared down at his cereal. “So, any big plans for today?”

A finger suddenly got awfully close to his face. “Don’t you dare try and change the subject from how adorable you were as a child!”

“I have to talk to my brats about the Provisional Exam,” Shouta continued, doing his utmost to pretend that Hizashi wasn’t making grabby hands at his phone where the pictures were still resting on the screen. He went to turn it off, paused, glanced at his husband’s kitten eyes, before sighing heavily and sliding them over. “Fine.”

Hizashi practically squealed and swiped the phone up, beaming down at the pictures at Shouta and his late dog Gem. Shouta rolled his eyes and shoved more cereal into his mouth, waiting as patiently as he

could for his husband to be finished gushing over him. Which was, if he was being honest, not very patiently. Finally, *finally,* Hizashi looked up from the phone and slid it back to him with a teasing grin. “Very good evidence, I’ll put the puppy idea under advisement.”

. . . At least he was *considering it.* That was worth something.

“Good,” Shouta muttered, bringing up his bowl and slurping down the last of the now chocolate milk. He placed it down with a small thud and sighed, wiping at his mouth with his sleeve. “I do actually need to talk to my kids about the exam though. It’s only five days away and they need to get serious. They’ve been doing well training for it.”

Hizashi grinned and leaned forward. “And Shinsou and Midoriya? Gonna let them participate?”

Shouta sighed and tapped his spoon against the bowl. He still didn’t really like the idea. Shinsou had only been in the Hero Program for a short time and Midoriya had just gotten a new Quirk last week and was set to get another any fucking day now. Putting them both in the exam wasn’t something that Shouta was really jumping at the bit to do.

But . . . the progress they had made couldn’t be ignored. Shouta would be doing them both a disservice if he did.

“Yes,” he sighed with a nod. His lips twitched up a little at Hizashi’s immediate cheer. “I can still change my mind if I think at any point in the next five days that they need more time. But, from what I’ve seen, they’re as ready as they’ll ever be for the damn thing.”

“*Yeah,* that’s what I like to hear,” Hizashi cheered, throwing his hands up into the air. He beamed at Shouta, his hair that he hadn’t placed into his stiff updo falling over his shoulders and down into his face. He was just so fucking gorgeous. Shouta fought the urge to kiss him. And then remembered that he was in his own Goddamn apartment, leaned forward, and pecked his husband on the lips.

Hizashi hummed into the kiss and pressed another to Shouta’s cheek when he pulled again. “You’re a good teach, Shouchan,” he chuckled. “I’m sure that your boys will love hearing that they get to participate.” His smile dimmed and he rubbed at his forehead with a sigh. “But, that leave me with one of mine. Bakugou. He’s not ready to get back into the Hero Course.”

Shouta grunted and grabbed his tea, taking a big sip of it. “It’s been a week. I’d be damned surprised if he was.”

“I know, babe. But he knows that the exam is this weekend and . . . I have a feeling he won’t be happy about missing it.”

Oh, Bakugou certainly wouldn’t be. If there was one thing that Shouta knew about that kid was that he didn’t like being held back.

Shouta reached out silently, not knowing what to say to comfort his partner, and grabbed Hizashi’s hand. He gently raised it and pressed a kiss to the back, gently squeezing it as he did so. He risked a glance up and nearly cringed at the utter sappy look full of love on Hizashi’s face.

Gross, emotions

“Best Husband ever,” Hizashi whispered, pressing a kiss in return to Shouta’s forehead.

Gross, emotions.

“Now that I’ve gotten the rest of the announcements out of the way, there’s a special announcement I have to make. And if you listen to anything I have to say today, it better be this, so listen up.”

Shouta leaned against his podium, staring down at his students with a serious expression on his face that was rather uncommon so early in the day. Especially during homeroom. Especially at eight o’clock in the morning. Especially after all of the regular announcements had already been given. If Shouta was being completely and utterly honest with himself, he was usually curled up and fast asleep in his sleeping bag by ten minutes the school day. Homeroom’s schedule was something that all students knew by heart:

1. Announcements
2. Shouta gets into his sleeping bag
3. The students have a self-study period or talk quietly among themselves, trying their fucking hardest the entire time to not wake Shouta up
    1. If they do wake Shouta up from his nap, sit there quietly and pray.

But Shouta had already finished with his regular announcements

and he still standing up straight, or as straight as he got outside of exercises or battles and gazing out at them with a grave gleam in his eyes. And, to their credit, Shouta's brats seemed to pick up on the mood that Shouta was in and immediately settled, sitting up a little straighter in their seats and giving the man their complete and utter attention. A quick glance showed Midoriya going tense, looking like he was ready to jump out of his seat and fight at a moment's notice, Uraraka's eyes gaining a steely shine, and Todoroki clenching his jaw tightly. All nineteen of Shouta's nightmares looked ready to stand upright there and march out to war if Shouta said the word.

"It sucks. When kids have to fight before they're ready."

Shouta mentally shuddered and pushed Gran Torino's words hard out of his mind. Now was *not* the time.

"On Saturday, you have the Provisional Exam. That means that you all have five days left until you'll be woken up at dawn and put on buses to be brought out to the exam site." Shouta leaned heavily against the podium, feeling like a weight was being pushed down hard on his shoulders. "For the next five days, your Heroics Period will be spent on nothing else but training. Use those five days wisely."

It was times like this when Shouta realized just how fucking young these kids were. Because even though Shouta was staring out at them seriously, even though he looked like he was giving them news more akin to a death in the family than the news of an upcoming exam, even though the only times they had ever seen him this serious was in battle. . .

They all immediately relaxed and glanced at each other with excited, hopeful smiles.

They had no fucking idea what the odds of their success were.

It was the same each and every year. Students would walk out onto the exam site and get him hard and fast by what the officials threw at them. Many got overwhelmed and failed. Many got injured early on and couldn't continue. Many did everything fucking right and still failed because of mistakes made by others, from Yuuei or from other schools altogether, that brought their own scores down. Every year, Shouta watched at least one kid leave the exam trying to hold back tears at their failure and have to wait until the next exam to try for their Provisional licenses.

And those were Second Years. Shouta was currently looking out

at nineteen First Years. Nineteen First Years who were going to be target number one because of no other reason than they managed to score spots at the top Hero School.

Usually, Shouta didn't have much sympathy for those targeted by what had come to be known as *'The Crushing of Yuuei'.* Most everyone in real life would know about their Quirks when they had graduated and Shouta would rather them be made aware of it in a relatively safe exam than out in the real world. But, usually, the kids in the exam had a year of intense training already under their belts.

These kids had only had one semester.

It was times like this that Shouta was glad he didn't believe in the concept of fairness. Looking out at these kids right now would probably hurt a lot more if he did.

"Five days too many," Kaminari cried, slamming his hands against his desk and sending off a few harmless sparks with a bright, excited grin. The people sitting near him didn't even flinch, more than used to this by this time in the school year.

At least Hizashi had shown Kaminari ways to stop shorting out lightbulbs. Progress.

Kirishima laughed and pumped his fist in the air, practically vibrating right out of his chair from his eagerness to get going. "I know, *right?!"* He traded an excited grin with Midoriya, Shouta's personal student sharing Kirishima's sudden vibrations. "I just, ahhhh!" He ran his hands through his hair, a touch of nerves running through his eagerness. "I don't know if I'm excited or scared out of my freaking mind?!"

"Probably both," Uraraka chuckled, rubbing the back of her neck where a secret undercut laid. Turned out that while she hadn't gotten the full on undercut that Todoroki and Midoriya had, with shaved sides and all, Ashido *had* shaved the nape of her neck. Shouta had found that out when she had bounced into homeroom with a tiny ponytail, tucked in between Todoroki and Midoriya as they showed off their matching styles. "I know I sure am!"

They should be. They really, really should be.

Shouta raked his eyes over the class, examining them all carefully. It looked like not all of them were as upbeat and excited that his first glance showed. Koda was playing with his fingers

nervously, Shinsou was biting his lip and clenching his fists tightly, and Shoji had de-manifested the mouth he usually kept on one of his arms. Even the ones who had been completely and utterly upbeat at first had hints of nerves in their eyes.

If Shouta was in their spots, a First Year with only one semester of training, he would be shaking in his fucking boots. He honestly didn't think that he would've been able to even think properly if someone had tossed him into the deep end like that. He couldn't blame them for toeing the line between excitement and anxiousness. Or even crossing the line a little and going straight into apprehension.

And of course, that was when Problem Child spoke up.

One look at the boy had told Shouta that Midoriya was one of the students who had skipped excitement all together and jumped straight to overwhelming anxiety. He had planned on taking him and a few of the other more anxious students aside to give them a pep talk before the actual exam. He may know that they had worse odds than those put into the fucking Hunger Games but this wasn't the time to put the fear of God into his kids. It was time to show that he believed in their skills. Even if they failed, as long as they tried, Shouta knew that he would be proud.

But even though Midoriya had starting to shy into himself the moment the words Provisional Exam had passed Shouta's lips, the moment that doubt and uncertainly started passing through his classmates', Midoriya straightened up and beamed at them. It wasn't the smile akin to All Might's own dumb grin that Shouta had gotten used to in the past. Oh, there were certainly still elements of it in there. The smile certainly made the rest of the brats straighten and even made a few relax a little. As if everything would be okay because Midoriya was smiling and looked like he had something to say.

But there was something else there too. The grin was wider and showed a little more teeth than it used to. It was familiar. Oddly familiar.

Where the hell had Shouta seen smiles like that before?

"T-that's alright," the boy in question chirped, tilting his chin up. With his new haircut and that oddly sadistic grin stretching across his cheeks, he looked a little more like the leader that Shouta knew that he had the potential to be. A little less like the scared kid that had stumbled into Shouta's classroom on the first day. Midoriya's smile

dimmed a little and his tone lowered. “Nerves, nerves are good! I-it’s gonna be hard. Really hard.”

The tone sobered in the way that it hadn’t when Shouta had given his announcement. Nods passed through the room, frowns etching their way onto each students’ face. But every eye hung onto Midoriya, each student ensnared by his words. Even though Midoriya was currently staring down at his hands thoughtfully, no one looked away from him. Even Shouta found himself staring, listening intently to the boy’s words.

It reminded Shouta almost of all the times he saw Nedzu in a press conference. In any other situation, people might be able to overlook him. Small and seemingly weaker than everyone else. And yet there, standing in front of them all, every reporter hung onto every word the rat had to say. It was like that now. Midoriya seemed to have a sort of magnetism to him, drawing every eye to him until it wouldn’t matter if a bomb went off right outside. Midoriya was talking. Everything else was secondary.

Midoriya took a deep breath, clenching his scarred hands tightly until the twisting scars shone white. “But that’s good, isn’t it? I mean, how can we really call, call ourselves Pros if we’re not willing to step to the challenge? We’re at a disadvantage, sure. We’re going to be going up against Second Years. And we’re Yuuei students. Which means, um, if I’m right, they’ll all be looking at us. Gunning for us. Because they want to prove themselves and what better way to do that then taking out some Yuuei kids? They’re planning on us being easy pickings.”

For a second, the air got so heavy that Shouta could’ve cut it with his knife. There was no excitement now. Just a heavy sense of dread that Shouta had been unwilling to push onto his much too young students. But one that Midoriya cautiously laid on his classmates, gentle and careful not to scare them or draw their attention away from what he was saying.

For a second, the tension almost got too much. It felt like a few of the kids were going to choke on it. And then, Midoriya lifted his head and *beamed*. Bright, intense, and with that oddly familiar sly edge to it. And immediately, the tension lifted like it was never there in the first place. “That just means we gotta be smarter than them all, right?” He spread his hands and the sly edge seemed to spread until his eyes were practically twinkling with a dangerous intelligence. “Who wants to spend the next five days putting together a plan to

make sure that no one ever targets Yuuei students ever again?"

Shouta looked around at his students, their frowns turning back up into excited, eager grins and fought back a chuckle. He grabbed his sleeping bag and said nothing as desks started to be turned to face Midoriya's or when Yaoyorozu slid a small whiteboard and marker out of her arm for Midoriya to use. He just slid into his sleeping bag and laid down on the ground, closing his eyes and drifting off into a nap to the sound of his Demons plotting.

Maybe he didn't have as much to worry about as he initially thought. After all. These weren't any *normal* First Years. Shouta did call them Hell Spawn for a reason. He would do good to remember that.

"The Provisional Exam is on Saturday."

Shouta hummed and didn't even look up from his book. He was in 1-A's classroom, waiting for lunch to end and for his students to turn up for Law and Ethics. The sun was up high in the sky and currently making Shouta regret every choice that he had ever made that involved making his costume dark colours. Primarily, black. Was it useful when patrolling? Yes. Was it useful when tailing suspects or villains and Shouta wanted to remain in the shadows? Yes. Was it useful when spying on his brats' demonic activities to make sure that they weren't *actually* summoning a demon? Oh, *hell yes.*

But, holy shit, did it make Shouta sweat buckets on days this hot.

Which was why Shouta had fled the teachers' lounge that was filled to the brim with other heroes that were also dying of the fucking heat. Instead, Shouta had escaped to his homeroom with a Pre-Quirk poetry book, a thermos full of ice coffee that Hizashi had made him, and a portable fan to wait for his brats to finish with their lunches and come join him in the homeroom. Luckily, Shouta could count on no students coming back to the homeroom during lunch, all of them too focused on stuffing their faces with Lunchrush's cooking.

Well. Almost all of the students.

"Good Afternoon, Bakugou," Shouta muttered, turning the page of his book and fighting a small smile at a picture of a tiger on the page. Big cat. God, Shouta loved big cats. He glanced up and gave his

former student a dry look. Bakugou glared back at him, the new book about Prejudice in modern society that Shouta had loaned him tucked under his arm. He had his bag slung over his shoulder and a steely glare in his eyes. “Is there a *reason* that you’re here during lunch and not eating, studying, or perhaps sitting with your friends?”

Bakugou gritted his teeth and crossed his arms tightly. “The Provisional Exam is on Saturday,” he repeated tightly. He didn’t say anything else, gripping the loaned book tightly. He seemed to be waiting for something like he was expecting Shouta to say or do something.

Shouta slowly blinked at him, not saying anything.

He knew what Bakugou wanted here. He *knew*. And he really had to no idea how to handle this other than shoot down Bakugou down immediately. Because Shouta had *nothing* to do with the decision whether or not Bakugou should be brought back into the Hero Course and when that magical day should be. That was Hizashi, Hound Dog, and Nedzu’s business. Shouta had been Bakugou’s Homeroom Teacher. Had been. Used to be. He might’ve kicked him out of 1-A but that was where Shouta’s part of this all ended.

And even if Shouta was involved with this major decision, he wouldn’t make it during lunch while reading a poetry book. And he wouldn’t make it alone and on a snap decision. And the decision that Shouta made right now wouldn’t be the one that Bakugou wanted to hear.

“Bakugou,” Shouta finally said softly, tilting his head. He tried to put some kindness in his next words. “Go back to the cafeteria and eat your lunch. There’s still plenty of the day left and you still have Quirk Control classes.”

Bakugou clenched his hands until Shouta could see his knuckles turning white. “I’ve been in 1-C for a week now,” he hissed. “I’ve been good. I haven’t gone near Deku. I’ve gone to all the classes in 1-C. I even wrote the essays that Nedzu-sensei told me to.”

Shouta frowned. “I thought that Yamada said that you were still writing those.”

“Is it really my fucking fault that the fucking Rat wouldn’t accept them?!”

Ah. That made sense. Shouta had almost forgotten how sadistic

Nedzu could be when it came to moral essays and just how many times he'd turn them away if he didn't feel that the writer had learnt their lesson. Shouta had never been objected to those moral essays, thank God, but he had seen many, many, many students write them over the years. And they all learnt something by the time they finished. Hell, Shouta had seen one little shit completely change their very outlook on life after rewriting their moral essay almost ten times.

But, God, Nedzu had high standards to those fucking essays.

"First of all, that is *not* a respectful way to speak about our Principal," Shouta sternly with a glare. That was *his* name for Nedzu and he had by *far* earned the right to call him that. He had been Nedzu's first personal *fucking* student. He had gone through hell and came out stronger. He survived long enough to look at Midoriya, Nedzu's newest personal student, and wish him all the luck in the fucking world. Shouta had *earned* that fucking fond nickname. "And I believe that you've been talked to plenty of times about your language, Bakugou."

Bakugou huffed and looked away, glaring at the wall. "Whatever," he muttered. "Why the fu- why am I still in General Education?"

Shouta sighed and placed his book down on his desk, leaning back in his chair. "Bakugou, I'm not the person who you should be talking to about this. And even if I was, I wouldn't be telling you what you wanted to hear." He leaned forward, pinning Bakugou with a firm stare and stapling his hands together. "If you think that doing the bare minimum of what we asked you is enough then you are not ready to return to the Hero Course."

"How the fuck is this the bare minimum!? I-"

"Why were you expelled from the Hero Course, Bakugou?"

Right away, Bakugou stopped short. He blinked at Shouta, looking a mix of confused, angry, and desperate. "What?"

Shouta didn't look away. He picked up his thermos of ice coffee, strong enough to crush bones, and took a long sip. He set it down after a mouthful and asked softly, "Why did I expel you from the Hero Course?"

"I, cause I messed with Deku a bit when we were little shits in middle school," Bakugou said, hunching his shoulders and glaring at

Shouta. There was very little anger in his eyes but instead almost uncertainty. Like he wasn't sure if the answer was right anymore. "And I get it, alright? That was wrong, Quirkless people are treated like shit. I get it."

"But do you regret it?"

There was a long silence.

Shouta arched an eyebrow. "Knowing what you did and *understanding* what you did is two very different things. You know, logically, what you did wrong. But can you honestly tell me that if you met a Quirkless person, or really anyone you thought was lesser than you, right here and right now that you wouldn't treat them the exact same way that you treated Midoriya? That your first thought wouldn't be that they're worthless? That if next year, a Quirkless person was put into the Hero Course, you wouldn't look down your nose at them and tell them that their dream was never going to become a reality?"

Bakugou gritted his teeth. "Quirkless people *can't* be heroes. They can't. Maybe they're not useless," he said, sounding like the words were being dragged out of him against his will. "But Heroics is all about Quirks."

"And I disagree. You seem to think that Powerful Quirks are all that have to do with being a good Hero."

"Because I'm right! I'm fucking right and you know it!" Bakugou stepped forward, waving his free hand wildly. "Look at the Heroes in the top ten! All of them had powerful Quirks! Every single one of them! Look at the top twenty! Not a single one of them don't have powerful Quirks! And they're all the best heroes in fucking Japan!"

"We obviously have a different opinion on what makes a good Hero.'" Shouta shrugged. "Bakugou, what's my ranking?"

Bakugou screwed up his face in confusion. "What?"

"What's my ranking?"

The boy rolled his eyes and huffed. "You're unranked because you're Underground. All Underground Heroes sign with the Underground Heroics Alliance and they make sure that you Unders stay anonymous. Everybody knows that."

They didn't but that wasn't important right now. Shouta hummed. "So, I must be a pretty terrible Hero then. Since I'm not in the top ten or twenty."

"That's not the same thing and you fucking know it!"

God, Shouta was not awake enough for this argument. "I don't see how it's not." He shrugged and stood up, nodding to the door. "Bakugou, go sit with your friends and eat your lunch."

For a long minute, Bakugou just stared at him. He looked both furious and close to tears out of pure frustration. And it took everything in Shouta not to try to comfort the kid. He had seen several kids cry over the years. He had even caused some of those tears with the various kids he had expelled. And Shouta hated seeing kids cry. He fucking hated it.

But different kids needed different things and Bakugou was one of the ones that needed some tough love.

". . . I'm falling behind," Bakugou hissed, turning his head away so it cast a shadow across his expression. "If I don't get back into the Hero Course right now, I won't be able to catch back up. They're all going to get their Provisional Licences and even if I get back in next year, I'll still be behind."

Ah. And here they came to the meat of why Bakugou was here during lunch. Existential Dread.

Shouta sighed and softened his voice. Hopefully not enough for Bakugou to bristle but enough for him to hopefully calm down just a little. "Bakugou, if I had my way, no First Year would be taking the Provisional Exam. No one in your year would be getting on that bus next week if circumstances weren't what they were. Before this year, every single Hero student took the exam in their Second Year. Having to take the exam next year wouldn't mean that you're behind." He shrugged and said casually, "Besides, I wasn't transferred to the Hero Course until my Second Year. Trust me when I say that catching up is possible."

Bakugou didn't say anything for a minute before stomping over to the door. It looked like he was about to leave for a moment before he paused at the door. ". . . How's Shitty Hair doing?"

Shouta arched an eyebrow. He had almost forgotten about the fight that he had broken up between the two of them and the

development of Kirishima knowing about Bakugou's bullying and Midoriya's years of Quirklessness. But what surprised him was how Bakugou's voice softened slightly, sounding hesitant and uncertain. "The last I saw him," he asked, thinking about the smiling boy he had seen the day before grinning about his new haircut. "He's doing fine."

". . . I knew that he would react badly to it all," Bakugou muttered, sticking his hands in his pockets. "I just . . . I don't fucking know. I thought that our friendship or whatever was strong enough to power through."

And maybe if Bakugou had come clean initially it would have been. If Bakugou admitted to Kirishima of all the things he did and showed honest and genuine regret. But he hadn't. And like all kids who had been bullied in the past, Kirishima had long memories and little pity for those facing consequences.

Shouta didn't know what to say to that. Luckily, Bakugou left 1-A's classroom before he had to think of anything.

"One line, brats," Shouta called over his shoulder absentmindedly as he marched them across the field grounds and towards the gym that they had been using lately for training for the Provisional exam. It was late in the afternoon, the hot, sweltering sun high in the sky. Even with the kids changed out of their stiff uniforms and in their gym uniforms, it looked like they were suffering. They were probably thankful for cutting their hair into shorter styles now.

Shouta, with his own long black hair and black jumpsuit, hated every single one of them.

Shouta sighed and pulled a hair elastic out from his jumpsuit and pulled his hair up into a simple ponytail. There. At least it was off of his neck, at the very least.

"Sensei," Ashido's voice crowed from near the back of the line. "Sensei, is your hair bothering you!? Me and Sero-"

"Nope."

Sero groaned. "But, sensei-"

Shouta rolled his eyes and sent a glare at them from other his shoulder, stopping in front of the gym and pulling open the door. "No.

Focus, Hell Spawn. It's time for training and a wandering mind is a mind not focused on what you're doing. Which leads to what?"

All nineteen students called out, voices low and serious. "Injuries and mayhem."

Good. They were listening to what Shouta was pounding into their skulls.

Shouta nodded sharply and walked inside the gym, leaving his Hellions to file in behind him. Even with how hot it was outside; the brats were chatting happily and nearly vibrating from their eagerness to get out on that training field and blow things up. Which Shouta understood, he did. He was a Hero student once, years ago. One might think that Second Year Shouta would've been the last person they needed to worry about when it came to explosions. After all, he only had an erasure Quirk and a fancy scarf. How could he possibly make anything explode?

There had been six kids in his year with biochemical Quirks and Shouta was ranked first in his chemistry classes. Shouta always found a way.

Speaking of explosions, the gym they were filing into sounded a little too full of them for a gym that was supposed to be empty and waiting for 1-A's time to destroy it.

And it only took Shouta walking into the main area to see why. He rolled his eyes up skyward and silently asked for just an ounce of patience. He cleared his throat and tilted his head, slowly lowering his gaze to meet the glaring eyes of his co-worker. "Oh, look, Hell Spawn" he announced blandly. "It looks like an entire class and their teacher forgot to tell time." The explosions from Shouta's sister class stopped and twenty pairs of eyes landed on Shouta and the Demons.

1-B. The Enemy.

Shouta knew that he didn't look like someone who took rivalry seriously. And he very rarely was. Competition was healthy and all that but Shouta just never saw the point to it. Why concern himself with what others were doing when he could focus solely on bettering himself? Sure, it had been something he struggled with when he was younger. But even then, Shouta tended to ignore everyone else and focus on nothing else but the progress he was making.

But, fuck, did the B classes light that competitive fire under

Shouta's ass.

Even when he was still a General Education student, something about that class made him want to beat them in every single category that he could. A true A student through and through, even when he wasn't actually an A student. At the Sports Festival, Shouta kicked ass indiscriminately and without thought of whose ass he had been kicking. But when he won against the 1-B tank that he had paired against in the finals? Shouta would've been lying if he claimed not to feel just a bit of pride.

It was probably for the best that Nedzu managed to get Shouta into the A classes. He probably would've had a mental breakdown at being put in with the B kids after all those seeds of a future rivalry had already started to bloom.

Maybe now that he was a teacher he should try and calm that competitive fire. But, honestly, it wasn't like Vlad was doing anything to tame his so Shouta felt fine with continuing with what he was doing. "Hey, 1-B booked this gym for a double period," Vlad snapped, crossing his arms and glaring out at Shouta. "What, didn't think to look at the schedule? I'd expect that from an A teacher."

Shouta heard quiet snickers from a B kid, it was that Monoma kid, he just knew it, and felt his Hellions crowd in behind him slightly. Diamond formation, he guessed from the way he could see them positioning themselves from the corner of his eye. Good, they were listening in tactic classes. "Just like I'd expect a B teacher not to check to see if that was allowed," Shouta drawled. "I specifically remember Nedzu-san saying that no double periods of training for either of our classes in the week before their exams were permitted. Don't want to tire the brats out. So, it looks like it's *our time*."

"It's not even time for your class to be here! You're early!"

Shouta glanced at the clock on the wall and blinked slowly. "Vlad, we're right on time. Get out of our gym."

Vlad huffed but turned to his class. Conceding defeat. For now. The man was crafty. This wasn't the end. "Alright, kids, time to pack up for the day! Get your gear and get changed to head back for math."

Shouta rolled his eyes and turned away from The Enemy and their teacher and turned to his pack of never ever nightmares. "Alright, we're working on team moves today," he said sternly, making sure that every eye was turned to him. "Partner up and don't

partner up with a friend just because they're a friend. Think about your Quirks, skills, and what you want your team moves to achieve. The exam might be grading you individually but there is no rule against teaming up. Think critically about what you want to achieve here. You only have five days left."

The kids all nodded and then eighteen heads swivelled to Midoriya. Midoriya, who had had his head ducked and was muttering softly under his breath, caught the eyes trained on him and shied back slightly into Todoroki's side. For a moment, Shouta wondered what was going on and if he was going to have to stop eighteen brats from tearing Midoriya into pieces for a chance to partner with him. Or, more specifially, stop Todoroki from committing mass murder to keep his best friend all to himself. But Midoriya straightened and a small, nervous smile grew on his face. "O-okay, so I was thinking over lunch about, about possible pairings and I have ideas!"

Ah right. Their plan. Their plan to utterly embarrass and destroy all of the other schools that targeted them. That plan.

Shouta kept back and just watched silently as Midoriya started to divide his class up, pairing them up in ways that Shouta both saw the potential in and never would've thought of if he was doing it alone. Yaoyorozu and Ashido was an odd pairing but if Shouta heard the muttered instruction from Midoriya for them to, "practice making grenades," it sounded like they all had it well in hand.

By the time the class was divided up and 1-B were making their way out of the changing rooms, there were eight pairs of two and one pair of three. Midoriya was standing beside Tokoyami and Shinsou, the three of their heads ducked and all three muttering closely. It looked like Midoriya kept the three students who excelled in Underground training together. Were probably planning a stealth attack of some kind.

Excellent.

"Ohhhh, looks like 1-A is so self-important that they find it necessary to cut into 1-B's training time," a voice rang out, almost sing-songy and mocking in its tone. Shouta glanced over and rolled his eyes at the Monoma kid grinning mockingly from where he was waiting for the rest of his class. Honestly, Shouta really did like the kid's competitive spirit. He did. Hell, he'd be a fucking hypocrite if he didn't.

But there's a rivalry and there's being an asshole. And that kid was riding the line of it rather boldly right now.

Shouta pursed his lips and glanced over at Vlad pointedly. Shouta tended not to deal with kids from other classes if he didn't have to. Sure, he would willingly hand out detentions or expulsions if the situation called for it but if their homeroom teacher was right there, Shouta preferred letting that teacher do their fucking job and reign in their student. But Vlad had his back turned, talking with a soft-spoken Tsunotori. He glanced back at his kids and while a few of them rolled their eyes or sent a few glares Monoma's way, none of them seemed that bothered by the brat's words.

So Shouta sent a warning glare his way and made a mental note to discuss his behaviour with Vlad at a later date. "Alright, Hell Spawn," he called out sharply. "Let's go! While we still have day-"

"You know, I'm surprised that all of 1-A is allowed to even take the exam. Especially since five of you went against orders and nearly got everyone killed at Kamino! You know, I thought that Bakugou was the one who ended All Might but maybe it was the five that snuck into a battle and took his attention away from the villain. Rather villainous, huh, being the ones who killed All Might?"

Shouta's head whipped around and his eyes flashed bright red. Alright. It looked like Monoma just crossed the fucking line.

Kamino Ward was a touchy subject for Shouta. He hated the fact that five of his kids had snuck their way into being there. He hated the fact that they put themselves at risk. He fucking *loathed* the fact that they decided to go there themselves instead of just *talking* to him and trusting that he could help them. Yes, he had punished them and warned that they were all being watched closely after that stunt.

But there was a part of him, buried deep underneath that instinctual fear and anger he had felt from watching his five brats fly across the sky to snatch Bakugou out from thin air, that was damn proud. Proud that they went back for a classmate. Did that make their actions okay? Fuck no, they could've died. Shouta wouldn't say that they had been in the right even with a gun pointed to his head. But the pride was there, all the same, buried underneath the gut-wrenching fear and protectiveness.

And Shouta did *not* like hearing someone tear down his brats like that. In front of other students, no less. And that claim? The ones

who killed All Might? No. Just fucking no.

"Excuse me," Shouta hissed, straightening up to his full height and training his glare right at Monoma. It looked like the kid actually jolted at Shouta's deadly tone, paling drastically and eyes widening. "Did I just hear you accuse my students of villainous behaviour?"

Monoma sputtered, glancing at his classmates for support. Not one 1-B kid came to his defence, either watching the brewing conflict with wide eyes or looking away, obviously not wanting to get involved in all of it. "I, well, I," he swallowed, looking rather pale.

Shouta narrowed his eyes but, before he had the chance to say anything, Vlad's voice rang out. "Monoma! That's crossing a line!" He walked up to Shouta's side and glared at his student. Vlad might be just as competitive as Shouta and felt the same way about the A classes as Shouta did about the B classes. But, to his credit, he stayed firmly off the side of being an asshole. In front of the kids anyway. "The rest of you, head straight to math! Monoma, come with me to my office!"

"Y-yes, sensei."

Shouta caught Vlad's arm before he could stalk off and hissed in his ear, "I expect apology letters," before letting go. Vlad nodded grimly and herded his class out, the B kids trailing after him quietly. There were a few muttered apologies from them to 1-A and bright red, embarrassed faces. 1-A didn't say a single word back in reply. Fourteen of them were crowded around the five that Monoma had singled out.

Iida had his shoulders hunched up to his ears and head ducked so low that Shouta couldn't read his expression. Yaoyorozu was hugging herself around her middle and screwing her face up in a face like she was holding back tears. Kirishima was glaring after 1-B like he had a few words of his own he'd like to spit out after Monoma. And Todoroki and Midoriya were pressed against each other, holding hands so tightly that their knuckles were white and the scars on Midoriya's hands stood right out. Todoroki's face was blank, giving away nothing. But Midoriya looked *gutted*. Like someone had killed his pet right in front of him.

The ones who killed All Might. Five kids who just wanted to save a classmate.

Alright. Time for Shouta to take control. "Alright, Hell Spawn,

run through your warmup exercises," he said sternly, walking forward and jerking his head towards the exit. "You five, with me." He glared at his brats when a few protests rang out until they trailed onto the field. Shouta walked out of the gym with the five kids trailing after him silently. He called over his shoulder, "No Quirks, no sparing, just warmups," before walking out of the gym and closing the door behind his kids.

The five kids stayed quiet, crowded together and looking at him with teary yet defiant eyes. It was the same expressions they wore when he had gone to them after Kamino. Like they were more than aware of what they had done, knew that no one would improve of what they did, but would do it again without question. And while Shouta hated that stubbornness at times, it was this same stubbornness and need to do good that made Shouta knew that they'd be amazing Heroes one day. "Are the five of you alright," he asked, softening his tone slightly.

". . .We're okay, sensei," Yaoyorozu whispered, wiping at her eyes sheepishly. She managed to pull up a shaky, weak smile. "Really."

Todoroki nodded sharply, gripping Midoriya's hand tightly. "Monoma's an idiot," he said blandly, not looking bothered in the slightest. But the way that his hand shook and how close he and Midoriya were pressed up against each other told Shouta the truth. "We've learnt to just tune out what he says."

Shouta narrowed his eyes. "Has he said something like this to you before?" The five of them glanced at each other, hesitating, and Shouta softened his expression. "I just want to help."

"We know, sensei," Kirishima said, rubbing the back of his neck with a shrug. "But it's nothing, really. I mean, this is the first time he's ever brought up Kamino Ward. Usually, it's other stuff and we can deal with that stuff fine. Monoma's Monoma, y'know? We can deal with it."

Other stuff?

"Other stuff?"

Midoriya sniffled and wiped at his eyes, blinking hard to keep back tears. He tried to bring up a smile but it fell flat. Shouta just knew those words *'The ones that killed All Might'* were ringing in the kid's mind, even with how pissed he was at him. "Just . . . about how

we're glory hounds, I guess? Since we get attacked by villains a lot and the media always talk about us. I guess that he thinks that we think we're better than 1-B better of it." He shrugged and leaned his head against Todoroki's shoulder. Todoroki immediately wrapped his arm around Midoriya, leaning his head against the top of his friend's.

Blood was *roaring* in Shouta's ears. "Does he now," he asked smoothly, his voice sounding silky and a lot calmer than how he felt.

So, someone was mocking his kids for their roles in traumatic events, huh? Shouta would deal with that.

"It's very unheroic of him," Iida huffed, softer than he normally would. "But he isn't the first to say things like that when it comes to us, sensei. It is up to us to ignore them and continue working towards our goal."

Shouta closed his eyes and took a deep breath. He counted to ten, shoving aside all thoughts for the moment aside from those that were focused directly on talking to his students calmly and like an actual adult that they could come to for help. He would talk with Vlad later and have him reign in and punish his student. For now, his kids needed Shouta to be calm and rational. He opened his eyes and stared out at them solemnly. "You're right, Iida. It *is* unheroic of him. And I'll handle it. You won't have to hear those things again. And if he does say anything like that again, I want the five of you to come and speak with me."

Five pairs of eyes went wide. "B-but, sensei! Shouldn't we handle this ourselves," Kirishima stuttered.

Shouldn't we handle this ourselves? God, if Shouta hadn't already known that some of his kids had been bullied or tormented in the past then that one question would've confirmed it for him.

"No. Not when there's someone in a position that can do it better who's willing to help." Shouta reached forward and placed a hand on Kirishima's head, looking right in his eyes. "I'm more than willing to help. Let me handle things."

For a moment, none of his students said anything. They just glanced at each other. Finally, they all nodded. "Okay, Aizawa-sensei," Kirishima said softly.

It was like a door cracking open. Shouta knew that his kids trusted him and had imprinted on him. In battle, there was no one who they

trusted more. But there was a difference between trusting someone to watch your back out in the field and to watch your back out in civilian life. And for kids who had been hurt in the past, which Shouta knew most of his kids had, that difference was very vast.

And his kids were willing to take the hand that Shouta was offering to them. It was a start. There was a lot more work to put in but that was fine. Shouta had three years with these brats. He had time.

"Two weeks."

"One week."

"Two weeks."

"One week."

Shouta slurped at his coffee noisily and obnoxiously, staring out at Vlad the entire time too. He finally set his mug down with a small clink and leaned back in his chair. "Two weeks detention. And I still expect those apology letters."

Vlad groaned and buried his face in his hands. The other teachers were watching the two of them like they were playing tennis, eyes flicking between Shouta and Vlad hungrily. Shouta ignored them, just as he had been doing so ever since he had marched into the teachers' lounge, slid a chair over to Vlad's desk and demanded to know what Monoma's punishment would be. And when Vlad said that he had yet to assign anything, wanting to have time to calm down and properly think about one that would fit, well.

Shouta was more than happy to help out.

"It's a first offence, Aizawa," Vlad sighed, rubbing at his eyes. "And I know it's a bad one! Which is I'm giving him a *week* of detentions and having him write apology letters for your Hell Demons. A hundred words each."

"Hell Spawn," Shouta corrected. He ignored the snort behind him that he *knew* came from his husband. "And it's not the first offence. Just the first one we've caught, apparently. My students have confided in me that this is not the first time your student has mocked them for being caught up in traumatic events. Events that sent each and every one to therapy for being caught up in villain attacks during

the first week of school."

Vlad held up his hands peacefully. "And I sympathize! Aizawa, no one's saying that your kids haven't been through it! But I have to give my student the benefit of the doubt. He says that he understands what he did wrong and won't do it again. Monoma's a good kid! Helps out his friends in 1-B in physical training and some 1-D kids when they need help in General Education work!"

Shouta hummed. "And he calls my students glory hounds for daring to survive being attacked by villains." He took another sip before leaning back in his chair. "Two weeks detention, apology letters, and I get to have a talk with him."

"Oh, fucking – do you want *another* traumatized kid, Aizawa? Because that's what's going to happen if I let you talk to him!"

Shouta shrugged nonchalantly.

Vlad groaned and rubbed at his eyes. "One week," he finally said. "One week detention, apology letters, and you can talk to him. Right here in the teachers' lounge while I'm there." He held out a hand and arched an eyebrow.

Shouta nodded sharply and took Vlad's hand, shaking it once firmly before letting go. "Keep your kids in line, Vlad," he warned, standing up and grabbing his chair. He slid it back to his desk. "Monoma made Midoriya and Yaoyorozu cry. Do you even *know* how close he came to being punted into the sun?"

"By that Todoroki kid?"

"That's adorable," Shouta drawled. "You think Todoroki would've reached him before Uraraka did."

Vlad huffed and tilted his head in acknowledgement. "That one's a firecracker," he huffed, a silver of approval in his voice. He sighed and nodded. "And I will, Aizawa. Monoma was out of line today and I'll make sure that it doesn't happen again. He really is a good kid, Aizawa."

Yeah, a good kid. A good kid who felt it was perfectly okay to mock survivors of a villain attack. And out of what? Jealously? Self-esteem issues? Insecurity? Was Monoma jealous that his class didn't have to see their homeroom teacher crushed into the dirt by a giant monster? Was he angry that he only ever had to deal with low-level

villains while on his internship instead of having to face down a serial killer that wanted nothing more than to kill him?

Shouta understood insecurity. He had been the epitome of it during his career as a Yuuei student. But he had never bullied anyone because of it.

“Just keep him in line, Vlad.” Shouta pointed at him firmly. “And I swear to God if I hear of him even *looking* at my students wrong-“

“I got it, I got it! I’ll keep him in line!”

Shouta nodded sharply and dropped down into his desk, setting his mug down and rolled his shoulders. He ignored Vlad’s grimace at the cracks that followed. “So, now that that’s done, you think your kids are ready?”

Immediately, Vlad’s face dropped and he sighed. Shouta nodded sympathetically and, because he really did feel for Vlad, took the box of coffee-flavoured chocolates that Hizashi had brought him last week and offered Vlad one. The man took it and sighed, “We’re sending fucking *First Years* out in that exam site, Aizawa.”

“Yeah,” Shouta muttered, taking a piece of his own and popping it in his mouth. “We sure fucking are.”

The two of them fell silent. Rivalry aside, they were both teachers five days away from sending their kids out into an exam with the odds stacked against them. Nothing else to say.

The Provisional Exam was five days away.

End Notes

Please do not post comments where it's nothing but a large string of emojis. I have mentioned before that it hurts my eyes and overwhelms me. Please don't do that. I will be deleting comments like that from now on because they really make my eyes hurt.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!